

# Saipan Tribune

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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I N S I D E

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# Local

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# WEATHER FORECAST

**PICTURE TIME: 2:25 A.M., DECEMBER 17, 2003**  
Western North Pacific between Equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A monsoon trough extends from 6N130E through a tropical disturbance near 8N145E and finally to near 5N160E. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms associated with the disturbance are found in the Mariana islands as well as between Yap and Chuuk or between 4N and 16N from 139E to 153E. Just east of the monsoon trough, a surface trough of low pressure continues to near the equator at 168E. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms are developing north and east of the trough or within 100 miles either side of a line from 9N160E to the equator at 173E, including Kosrae. Trade-wind convergence is producing scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms across portions of the Marshall islands, between 4N and 16N from 170E to 180.


**SAIPAN AND TINIAN**

Cloudy and breezy with scattered showers, some locally heavy, and a slight chance of thunderstorms.

**Winds:** East at 20-25 mph. Gusting in 35 mph in showers.

**Temperature:** Lows near 78. Highs near 86.


**GUAM AND ROTA**

Cloudy and breezy with scattered showers, some locally heavy, and a slight chance of thunderstorms.

**Winds:** East at 20-25 mph. Gusting in 35 mph in showers.

**Temperature:** Lows near 78. Highs near 86.


**PALAU**

Partly cloudy with isolated showers.

**Winds:** Northeast at 10 kt.


**POHNPEI**

Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.

**Winds:** East at 10 kt.


**YAP AND ULITHI**

Partly cloudy with isolated showers.

**Winds:** Northeast at 10 kt.


**KOSRAE**

Partly cloudy with isolated showers.

**Winds:** Southeast at 10 kt.


**CHUUK**

Mostly cloudy with scattered showers with a slight chance of thunderstorms.

**Winds:** Northeast at 10-15 kt.


**MAJURO**

Mostly cloudy with scattered showers and a slight chance of thunderstorms.

**Winds:** East at 10-15 kt.

CITY	FORECAST	HIGH	LOW
Auckland	Cloudy	61F (16C)	49F (9C)
Beijing	Sunny	44F (7C)	26F (-3C)
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	74F (23C)	61F (16C)
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	86F (30C)	72F (22C)
London, England	Cloudy	56F (13C)	45F (7C)
Los Angeles	Cloudy	69F (21C)	51F (11C)
Manila	Cloudy	88F (31C)	71F (22C)
Melbourne	Sunny	73F (23C)	54F (12C)
Miami	Partly Cloudy	84F (29C)	75F (24C)
New York, NY	Cloudy	52F (11C)	48F (9C)
Osaka	Rain	54F (12C)	46F (8C)
Paris	Cloudy	53F (12C)	41F (5C)
Pusan	Rain	58F (14C)	43F (6C)
Rome	Partly Cloudy	55F (13C)	39F (4C)
Salem, Oregon	Rain	54F (12C)	38F (3C)
San Francisco	Sunny	64F (18C)	47F (5C)
Seoul	Rain	52F (11C)	45F (7C)
Tokyo	Rain	55F (13C)	49F (9C)
Washington, DC	Cloudy	60F (16C)	48F (9C)



# Opinion

## Saipan Tribune

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## EDITORIAL







# Northern Islands await fishery funding

By LIBERTY DONES  
REPORTER

Alamagan, Pagan, Agrigan and Asuncion, even on a daily basis.

The mayor's office is also lobbying for a homesteading program and the passage of an economic development and incentive act, an initiative that would provide incentives or tax credits to Northern Islands developers or investors.

Northern Islands Mayor Valentín I. Taisakan said his office is anxiously awaiting the release of federal grants for the municipality's remote fishing station project.

"It has been over a year since we received word that our project proposal will be funded, yet we have not heard nor received any word on the status of our grant award," said Taisakan in a Dec. 2003 letter to the U.S. Department of Commerce National Marine Fisheries Services office in Hawaii and the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council.

The mayor's office said yesterday the federal government may have to reduce the grant amount—originally set at \$125,000—in view of the volcanic eruption on Anatahan.

The original amount covered the construction of two fishing stations in the Northern Islands. Since Anatahan has been removed from the plan, the office may only get funding for one fishing station.

Taisakan said the Northern Islands Mayor's Office submitted the project proposal in June 2002 to the Council. In Oct. 2002, WPRFMC executive director Kitty Simmonds informed him of favorable action on the project. In fact, Taisakan said, the council included the project in a workshop during its regional meeting on Saipan in Feb. 2003.

At that time, the mayor's office was asked to submit additional forms to update the application. In August and September 2003, he said that the project passed a clearinghouse review, leading to the approval of the grant.

"We've been working closely with the council through a local coordinator. We were informed on numerous occasions to wait for further instructions... We were informed we should contact you directly for an update on the funding status as you're ready to proceed with the award. If this is correct, we're extremely delighted and look forward to working with you," said Taisakan to Simmonds and Kelvin K.Y. Char of the USDC Pacific Islands Area Office.

The Northern Islands Mayor's Office is pursuing a development plan for the islands, which requires legislative approval. It includes the passage of the Northern Islands Transportation and Infrastructure Financing Act, which would allow the government to borrow money to buy a passenger vessel, a cargo vessel and the construction of ramps on Saipan and four northern islands targeted for the development of terminal facilities.

Establishing ports or terminals would eventually open up the Northern Islands to other neighboring islands, so that people can have easy access to travel to the either Anatahan, Sarigan,

microl used cars  
+red



# Business

## BoH reports good fiscal standing for 2003



Bank of Hawaii Corporation yesterday reported diluted earnings per share for 2003 of \$2.21, up \$0.51 or 30 percent from diluted earnings per share of \$1.70 in 2002. Net income for the year was \$135.2 million, up \$14.0 million or 11.6 percent from \$121.2 million in the previous year. The return on average assets in 2003 was 1.44 percent, up from 1.22 percent in 2002. The return on average equity for the year was 15.02 percent, up from 10.24 percent in 2002.

"Our positive financial results for 2003 reflect the hard work and focus of our employees, and I'm proud of their accomplishments," said Michael E. O'Neill, chairman and CEO of Bank of Hawaii. "Last year

marked the final phase of our ambitious three-year strategic plan which began in 2001, and I'm pleased to report that we have exceeded all of our key goals. Entering 2004, Hawaii's economy continues its strong pace, and we believe our company is ready to build on its successes. We look forward to continuing the momentum as we prepare to execute our next three-year plan that will guide us through 2006."

Diluted earnings per share for the fourth quarter of 2003 were \$0.66, up \$0.22 or 50 percent from \$0.44 per diluted share for the same period last year. Net income in the fourth quarter was \$38.7 million, up 33.8 percent from net income of \$28.9 million in the fourth quarter last year. The return on average assets for the fourth quarter

of 2003 was 1.66 percent, up from 1.53 percent in the previous quarter and up from 1.20 percent in the fourth quarter of 2002. The return on average equity was 18.59 percent during the quarter, up from 16.69 percent in the third quarter of 2003 and up significantly from 10.72 percent in the same quarter last year.

Net interest income for the fourth quarter of 2003 was \$93.4 million, up \$2.3 million from net interest income of \$91.1 million in the third quarter of 2003 and up \$3.2 million from \$90.2 million in the same quarter last year. The increase in net interest income from the previous quarter was largely due to higher yields on investment securities. The increase in net interest income from the fourth quarter of 2002 was

primarily due to lower interest rates on deposits and a decline in short-term borrowings.

The company did not recognize a provision for loan and lease losses during the fourth quarter of 2003 and has not recorded a provision for the last six quarters. The allowance for loan and lease losses was reduced \$3.6 million from September 30, 2003, which equaled the amount of net charge-offs for the fourth quarter.

Non-interest income was \$49.4 million for the quarter, a decrease of \$4.4 million or 8.1 percent compared to non-interest income of \$53.8 million in

the third quarter of 2003. The decrease was primarily due to reduced gains on sales of mortgage loans and lower commercial loan prepayment penalties during the fourth quarter. Non-interest income was down \$0.9 million or 1.8 percent from non-interest income of \$50.4 million in the fourth quarter of 2002 largely due to a decline in gains on sales of mortgage loans.

Bank of Hawaii Corporation's strong credit quality continued to improve during the fourth quarter of 2003. Non-performing assets were \$31.7 million at the end of the quarter, a decrease of \$8.4 million, or 20.9 percent

compared to non-performing assets of \$40.1 million at the end of the previous quarter. Contributing to the improvement in non-performing assets was the fourth quarter 2003 sale of a \$3.7 million foreclosed property. Non-performing assets declined \$22.7 million, or 41.7 percent compared to \$54.4 million at the end of the fourth quarter last year. At December 31, 2003 the ratio of non-performing assets to total loans and foreclosed real estate was 0.55 percent compared with 0.72 percent at September 30, 2003 and 1.01 percent at December 31, 2002.

## Greenspan is confident on replacing jobs

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER  
AP ECONOMICS WRITER

Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan said Monday that jobs lost in the last recession can be replaced but that unemployed workers may need retraining to qualify for new work.

In a speech prepared for an economic conference in London, Greenspan sought to address fears that many of the

Greenspan said what people needed to keep in mind is that the U.S. economy has always been able to generate enough jobs in cutting-edge industries to replace jobs lost in industries facing the highest competition from low-wage labor.

This has given the country an average of 94 percent employment of its work force, he said, predicting that this process will continue.

"We can thus be confident that new jobs will replace old ones as they always have, but not without a high degree of pain for those caught in the job-losing segment of America's massive job-turnover process," Greenspan said.

He warned U.S. policy-makers worried about the loss of jobs not to heed calls for an increase in protectionist trade barriers, saying such a move could be "unexpectedly destabilizing" to the global economy.

"I remain optimistic that we and our global trading partners will shun that path," he said. "The evidence is simply too compelling that our mutual interests are best served by promoting the free flow of goods and services among our increasingly flexible and dynamic market economies."

Greenspan, in his remarks, did not discuss the outlook for the U.S. economy. Federal Reserve policy-makers will begin a two-day meeting on Tuesday in which they are widely expected to keep pledging to keep inter-

est rates low for a "considerable period" to generate stronger job growth.

In his speech, delivered by satellite to London, Greenspan said the U.S. economy has become more flexible because of government moves over the past three decades to deregulate a number of industries from banking to trucking.

He said this new flexibility has helped to make the past two recessions in the United States, the 1991 downturn and the 2001 slump, the mildest of the post World War II period.

"The more flexible an economy, the greater its ability to self-correct in response to inevitable, often unanticipated disturbances," Greenspan said. "Enhanced flexibility has the advantage of being able to adjust automatically and not having to rest on policy-makers' initiatives, which often come too late or are misguided."

As he has in the past, Greenspan praised the increased use of complex financial instruments known as derivatives for boosting flexibility by allowing banks and other financial institutions to spread their risks.

He said derivatives had enabled financial institutions to weather the deep slump in the telecommunications industry after the bursting of the stock market bubble in 2000—even though globally telecommunications companies had taken out \$1 trillion in loans from 1998 to 2001.

"Prices of telecommunications stocks collapsed and many firms went bankrupt," Greenspan said. "But unlike in previous periods of large financial distress, no major financial institution defaulted and the world economy was not threatened."



Greenspan

2.8 million manufacturing jobs lost in the past 3 1/2 years could be gone forever to lower wage countries.

He said competition from low-wage countries was not a new development. He said that in the 1950s and 1960s, the concern was that U.S. jobs were migrating to Japan with fears about competition from Mexico rising in the 1990s. He said more recently the concern has been that we are losing jobs to China.

century travel golf

# Dow hits 31-month high, rises 134 points

By MEG RICHARDS  
AP BUSINESS WRITER

Encouraging words from Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan sent stocks soaring Monday as investors looked forward with renewed enthusiasm to upcoming earnings reports. The Dow Jones industrials reached a new 31-month high, rising more than 130 points.

The markets got a late-day boost from Greenspan, who told an economic conference in London he was confident that jobs lost during the recent recession could be replaced. He

also warned U.S. policy-makers against putting up protectionist trade barriers, saying it could be bad for the global economy.

"I think Mr. Greenspan has given us some hope," said Peter Cardillo, president and chief strategist of Global Partner Securities Inc. "He's confident there will be creation of new jobs and that was what the market wanted to hear."

The Dow gained 134.22, or 1.3 percent, to close at 10,702.51, after a weekly loss of 0.3 percent that ended eight weeks of advances. It was the index's highest finish since June 21, 2001, when it closed at 10,715.43.

The Dow is now slightly more than 1,000 points away from its all-time high close of 11,722.98, reached on Jan. 14, 2000.

The broader gauges also closed higher. Negative for much of the day, the Nasdaq composite index closed up 29.96, or 1.4 percent, at 2,153.83, after last week's 0.8 percent decline ended a six-week winning streak. The tech-heavy Nasdaq last closed higher on June 29, 2001, at 2,160.54.

The Standard & Poor's 500 index closed up 13.82, or 1.2 percent, at 1,155.37, following a weekly rise of 0.1 percent

- its ninth consecutive week of advances. It was the S&P 500's highest close since March 19, 2002, when it finished at 1,170.29.

About one-third of companies in the Standard & Poor's 500 have reported results so far, and earnings are up about 27 percent overall—better than the 21 percent increase Wall Street had expected. That combined with upbeat economic news bodes well for the economy, but some analysts are starting to worry that the market is overbought and may be headed for a pause.

Advancing issues outnumbered decliners about 5 to 4 on the New York Stock Exchange. Consolidated volume was moderate, with 1.91 billion shares traded, compared with 2.04 billion shares on Friday.

The Russell 2000 index, which tracks smaller company stocks, was up 5.36, or 0.9 percent, at 601.50.

Overseas, Japan's Nikkei stock average finished 2.8 percent higher Monday. In Europe, France's CAC-40 closed down 0.5 percent, Britain's FTSE 100 lost 0.3 percent and Germany's DAX index finished 0.6 percent lower.

## Jury set for Stewart stock fraud trial

Women outnumber men eight to four on the jury that will decide Martha Stewart's fate—a panel that includes a reverend, a man who lost money because of Enron's collapse and a woman who says the government should move faster to prosecute corporate scandals.

The jury, culled by lawyers from a pool of hundreds, was seated Monday to decide whether Stewart lied to investigators about a well-timed stock sale in 2001. Opening statements were set for Tuesday morning.

Many of the jurors told the judge in private interviews they had been exposed to some of the enormous pretrial publicity that has surrounded Stewart's prosecution but assured her they could be impartial anyway.

"If you see a headline about the case, turn the page. Look at another story," U.S. District Judge Miriam Goldman Cedarbaum told jurors. "If you hear something about the case, change the channel."

Stewart is accused of working with her stockbroker to concoct a story about why she sold 3,928 shares of ImClone Systems on Dec. 27, 2001—just before it plunged on a negative government review of an ImClone cancer drug.

The government claims Stewart was tipped that ImClone founder Sam Waksal was trying to dump his own shares. Stewart and the broker, Peter Bacanovic, say they had a pre-existing agreement to sell the stock when it fell to \$60 per share.

The jury includes a man who said he lost money in a mutual fund because the stocks in the fund were damaged by the collapse of Enron Corp. in 2001.

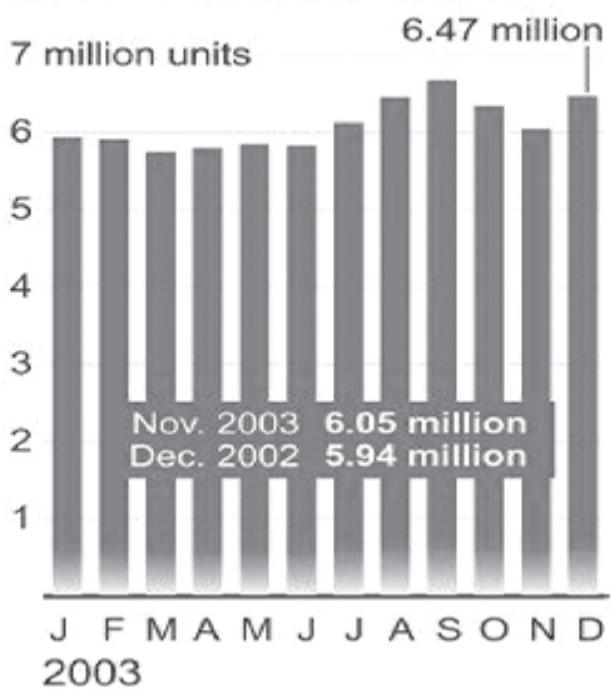
One juror said she believes poor people "often don't have the right to as much justice as they would like to have." She also said she wished the government would move faster to prosecute the corporate scandals because "I think a lot of people are concerned that things have happened that aren't being followed up." (AP)

## Existing homes sales set record for 2003

### Home sales

Here is a look at sales of existing single-family homes last month.

*Seasonally adjusted annualized rate*



SOURCE: National Association of Realtors

AP

## Hollinger seeks to block sale to Barclay

By SETH SUTEL  
AP BUSINESS WRITER

Hollinger International Inc. fired back at its controlling shareholder Conrad Black on Monday, taking legal steps to block his deal to sell the company to the Barclay brothers of Britain.

Hollinger International also adopted a "poison pill" measure, a defensive tactic used in corporate takeover battles that would allow minority shareholders to take a greater stake in the company in an attempt to stop a sale.

The moves marked the latest escalation in hostilities between Black, a Canadian-born newspaper baron, and the board of directors of Hollinger International, which publishes The Daily Telegraph of London, the Chicago Sun-Times and The Jerusalem Post.

The company has accused Black of siphoning off millions of dollars in unauthorized fees for himself and senior associates, and is demanding that he repay the money. The company has also ousted him as chairman, though he remains on the board and retains voting control through Hollinger International's parent company, Hollinger Inc. of Toronto.



Black has made a deal to sell his majority stake in Hollinger Inc. to the Barclay brothers of Britain, who own several newspapers and have interests in retailing. That deal, if it goes through, would allow the Barcays to assume Hollinger Inc.'s approximately 70 percent voting power in Hollinger International.

On Monday Hollinger International said it was suing Black in Chancery Court in Delaware to block the deal with the Barcays and to eliminate the super-voting class of shares held by the parent company should the deal be consummated. That would dilute the Barcays' voting stake in Hollinger International from

about 70 percent to about 30 percent.

Hollinger International took the steps after Black moved on Friday to change the bylaws of the Canadian parent company to give him veto power over any major transaction.

The "poison pill" measure and the lawsuit were approved Monday by a committee of Hollinger International's board made up of all directors except Black, his wife and Daniel Colson, a long-time business partner of Black's who is seen as loyal to him.

Those members include several U.S. political dignitaries including Henry Kissinger, former defense adviser Richard Perle and former Illinois Gov. James R. Thompson.

John Warden, a lawyer representing Black, denounced Hollinger International's move to adopt the "poison pill" measure as "a descent into the lawless conduct of corporate affairs" and a "futile attempt" to block the deal with the Barcays.









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# World

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## Life & Style

# 'Weird NJ' book flying off the shelves

By DAN DAY  
AP WRITER

**GROVERS MILL, N.J.** (AP) — Let's face it, America. New Jersey is one weird state.

Punch line to New Yorkers' jokes and gibes. Home to the Jersey Devil and Tony Soprano. And when Orson Welles sent the Martians to attack, he sent them here.

For the past decade, two New Jersey natives named Mark have been compiling the state's odd legends and cataloging its strange places for a magazine called *Weird NJ*. And just when you thought the Garden State couldn't get any weirder, Mark Sceurman and Mark Moran have published a book.

"*Weird NJ*" is in its fifth printing since coming out in September, seemingly flying in and out of bookstores the way Martian space ships zipped around Grovers Mill in Welles' classic 1938 radio play that thousands of people thought was real. Today the only visitors flying around the town are Canada geese, which flock to a pond near a plaque that commemorates the broadcast.

The Martian landing site, about 10 miles northeast of Trenton, is one of hundreds of strange places described in the "*Weird NJ*" book. Its 271 pages are filled with folklore and ghost stories, such as:

□ In 1735, a woman gave birth to a child who sprouted horns and batlike wings and terrified people in the Pine Barrens. The child became known as the Jersey Devil. (The New Jersey Devils hockey team takes its name from the creature.)

□ The Monkey-Man, an apelike man rumored to have terrorized Hoboken schools in the early 1980s.

□ Cry Baby Bridge in Middletown, where people say a baby cries in the

middle of the night at the spot where a baby drowned years ago.

□ Albino Village, a section of Clifton supposedly home to a community of albino people.

□ The Stone Living Room, a mysterious rock formation in Passaic County that was crafted either by native Americans or drunken high school kids.

For the authors, weird and New Jersey are a natural fit.

"When you just put the words together, people seem to instantly know what you're talking about," said Moran. He and Sceurman have backgrounds in graphics arts. They have wives and daughters. You might even say they're normal.

"We're not weird," Sceurman said. "Everybody else is."

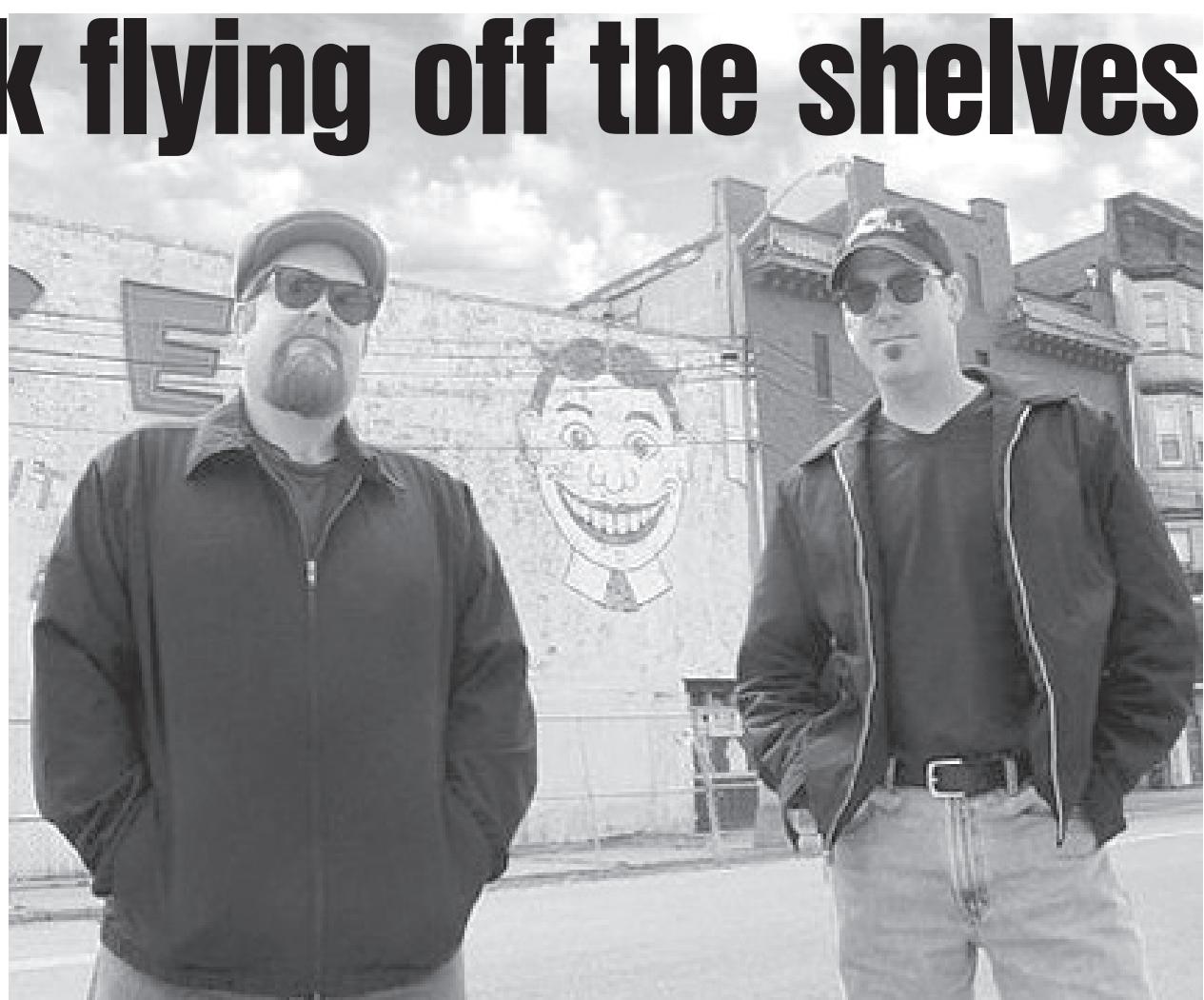
*Weird NJ* got its start in the early 1990s as Sceurman collected odd bits of information and produced a newsletter for friends. A cult following developed, and the newsletter evolved into a magazine mailed to New Jerseyans around the world.

Sceurman and Moran had long wanted to turn their material into a book and talked with several publishers before another Jersey guy happened along—Steve Riggio, chief executive officer of Barnes & Noble.

Riggio was visiting one of the bookseller's stores in 2002 and spotted a display of *Weird NJ* magazines.

"In the instant I saw the magazine, I saw the book," Riggio said. Barnes & Noble worked out a deal with Sceurman and Moran. The book was in print within a year and it has sold more than 100,000 copies.

"That's a mind-boggling, astounding figure," said Riggio, who described the book as a celebration of all that is weird and wonderful about New Jersey. The book is a star among the 4,000 active titles the bookseller's publishing division has in print, he said.



Mark Sceurman, left, and Mark Moran stand outside a closed Asbury Park, N.J. amusement center in this undated file photo. AP

## Musicians unveil digital 'manifesto'

**CANNES, France** (AP)—Rock veterans Peter Gabriel and Brian Eno are launching a provocative new musicians' alliance that would cut against the industry grain by letting artists sell their music online instead of only through record labels.

With the Internet transforming how people buy and listen to songs, musicians need to act now to claim digital music's future, Gabriel and Eno argued Monday as they handed out a slim red manifesto at a huge dealmaking music conference known as Midem.

They call the plan the "Magnificent Union of Digitally Download-

ing Artists"—or MUDDA, which has a less lofty ring to it.

"Unless artists quickly grasp the possibilities that are available to them, then the rules will get written, and they'll get written without much input from artists," said Eno, who has a long history of experimenting with technology.

By removing record labels from the equation, artists can set their own prices and set their own agendas, said the two independent musicians, who hope to launch the online alliance within a month.

Their pamphlet lists ideas for artists to explore once they're freed from the con-

fines of the CD format. One might decide to release a minute of music every day for a month. Another could post several recorded variations of the same song and ask fans what they like best.

Gabriel, who has his own label, Real World Records, said he isn't trying to shut down the record companies—he just wants to give artists more options.

"There are some artists who already tried to do everything on their own," he said, adding that those musicians often found out they didn't like marketing or accounting. "We believe there will be all sorts of models for this."

**mell**  
+red/blue

# Lopez, Affleck up for Razzie awards

**LOS ANGELES** (AP)—Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez's real-life romance crashed and burned. Now, the two are front-runners for worst on-screen love affair.

Affleck and Lopez's mob-comedy bomb "Gigli" had a leading nine nominations—among them worst picture and worst screen couple—for the Razzies, an annual spoof of the Academy Awards that mocks the year's most awful movies.

Mike Myers' storybook adaptation "Dr. Seuss' the Cat in the Hat" and "From Justin to Kelly," featuring "American Idol" stars Kelly Clarkson and Justin Guarini, came in second with eight nominations each, including worst picture.

The other worst-picture nominees announced Monday were the crime romp "Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle" and the reality-TV adaptation "The Real Cancun."

"Gigli" also was in the running for worst actor and actress,

supporting actor (Al Pacino and Christopher Walken), supporting actress (Lainie Kazan), and worst director and screenplay (Martin Brest). Affleck's worst-actor nomination also cited his performances in "Daredevil" and "Paycheck," while Walken's nomination also was for his role in "Kangaroo Jack."

A spokesman for Lopez said last week that she and Affleck had broken up after a year and a half of tabloid gossip about their wedding plans, which they abruptly called off last September. The roughly 500 Razzies voters probably were swayed by rumors about Affleck and Lopez's relationship.

"Ostensibly, we're talking about their on-screen performances, but I'm sure all the endless twaddle about their personal lives played into their being nominated," said Razzies founder John Wilson. "But it is an embarrassingly bad

movie, and unfortunately, it's not a fun bad movie."

Nominations for the 24th annual Razzies, organized by the Golden Raspberry Award Foundation, were announced a day before the Oscar nominations. Razzie "winners" will be announced Feb. 28, a day before the Oscar ceremony.

Myers and Guarini joined Affleck in the worst-actor lineup, along with Cuba Gooding Jr. ("Boat Trip," "The Fighting Temptations" and "Radio") and Ashton Kutcher ("Cheaper by the Dozen," "Just Married" and "My Boss's Daughter").

Besides Lopez, the worst-actress category included Clarkson, Angelina Jolie ("Beyond Borders" and "Lara Croft: Tomb Raider—The Cradle of Life") and "Charlie's Angels" co-stars Drew Barrymore and Cameron Diaz. Barrymore's nomination also cited her role in "Duplex."

## 'Rings' on track for Oscar award

**BEVERLY HILLS, Calif.** (AP)—"The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King" and its mythical creatures are poised to go where no fantasy film has gone before: The winner's circle at the Academy Awards.

With a leading four Golden Globe trophies, the final chapter of Peter Jackson's adaptation of the J.R.R. Tolkien trilogy appears ready to steamroll its way to the best-picture Oscar. Nominations come out Tuesday.

A box-office juggernaut heading toward \$1 billion in ticket sales worldwide, "Return of the King" took the dramatic-picture prize at Sunday's Globes, along with the best-director award for Jackson and the song and musical score honors.

Voters in the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences historically have been reluctant to even nominate fantasy films, and nothing as otherworldly as "Return of the King"—with its epic battles among hobbits, wizards, elves and orcs—has been named best picture.

Meantime, "Return of the King" has been embraced by critics and fans. Even the normally snooty New York Film Critics Circle chose the populist Tolkien finale as last year's best movie.

That all bodes well for the film's chances at the Feb. 29 Oscar ceremony, even though the academy generally prefers more down-to-earth dramas or epics rooted in history.

"It's one of the great mysteries of Hollywood that people in the business of make-believe don't have a great appreciation for fantasy," said Tom O'Neil, author of the book "Movie Awards."

But with the Globe wins for "Return of the King," Oscar voters "have just received permission to do what they've never done, to crown a fantasy film as best picture," O'Neil said.

The Globes are one of the most accurate Oscar oracles, with 44 out of 60 of the previous winners for either best drama or musical-comedy going on to win the top Academy Award.

The Globes have a seven-year streak in which one of its best-picture honorees has won

the top Academy Award, including "Shakespeare in Love," "American Beauty," "A Beautiful Mind" and last year's Oscar champ "Chicago."

Likewise, the Globes are an excellent forecast for how the top acting categories will shake out at the Oscars.

This time, Globe voters stuck with obvious favorites who have had the most critical buzz through awards season:

- Sean Penn as dramatic actor for "Mystic River," in which he plays an ex-hoodlum who falls back on his violent roots to seek revenge over his daughter's death.
- Charlize Theron as dramatic actress for her role as real-life prostitute-turned-serial-killer Aileen Wuornos in "Monster."

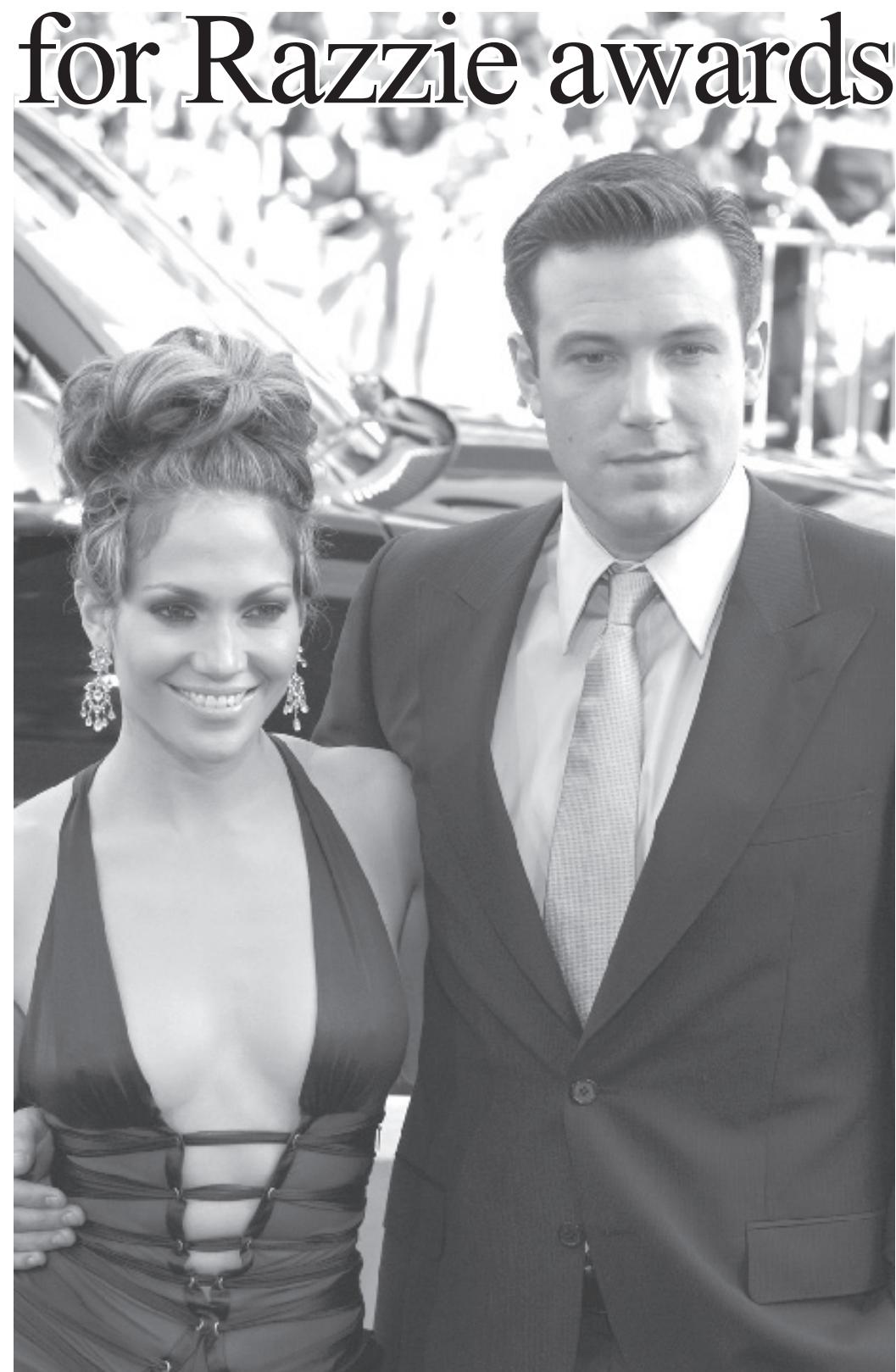
- Bill Murray as best musical or comedy actor as a has-been movie star in a quirky friendship with a young American woman in Tokyo in "Lost in Translation," which also took the Golden Globe for best musical or comedy and the screenplay prize for writer-director Sofia Coppola.

- Diane Keaton as best actress in a musical or comedy for "Something's Gotta Give," a comeback role that casts her as a 50-something romantic lead.

- Tim Robbins as supporting actor for "Mystic River," playing a man traumatized by sexual abuse as a child and suspected of murder as an adult.

- Renee Zellweger as supporting actress for "Cold Mountain," in which she co-stars as a salt-of-the-earth handywoman in the Confederate South.

A best-actress nominee the last two years for "Bridget Jones's Diary" and "Chicago," Zellweger could earn her third-straight Oscar nomination Tuesday. Backstage Sunday night, Zellweger played it coy on whether her Globe win would boost her Oscar prospects.



AP  
Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez pose for photographers as they arrive at the premiere of their film "Gigli," July 27, 2003, in the Westwood section of Los Angeles.

## Walters to step down as 20/20 co-host

**NEW YORK** (AP)—Barbara Walters' decision to step away from "20/20" promises a new pecking order in the competition she's dominated for decades—for prime-time, celebrity TV interviews.

Starting in September, Walters will no longer be co-host of ABC's "20/20," the news-magazine she's called home since 1979.

Walters, 74, will do about six interview specials a year for ABC News, including her annual pre-Oscar show. She'll also stay as executive producer and occasional co-host of "The View," the daytime talk show she created.

"Because there are so many shows on and because I've been so hands-on—I've had a piece on almost every single week—I don't know how to cut back on that," she said Monday. "You really can't."

ABC hasn't publicly discussed a replacement; Elizabeth Vargas would be one obvious possibility. John Stossel



Walters

is Walters' current co-host.

A Barbara Walters interview, often done with a soft-focus camera and subjects who break into tears, is as much a part of television news lore as Mike Wallace inducing someone to sweat on "60 Minutes."

The bagging of a big celebrity interview has become an increasingly important attention-getting device for news-magazines, which have faded somewhat in influence with the

popularity of reality TV.

Walters isn't unbeatable, but she's known as a relentless competitor and is often the first interviewer a celebrity considers for a prime-time Q-and-A. During the past year, she spoke to a post-indictment Martha Stewart and Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Her March 1999 interview with Monica Lewinsky drew a staggering 48.5 million viewers.

At ABC, Walters' decision clears a path for her chief in-house competitor, Diane Sawyer, who was the sounding board for last week's prime-time appearance by Howard Dean and his wife.

Robin Roberts and Lara Spencer of "Good Morning America" may also pick up some of the slack at ABC.

Katie Couric has been molded into NBC's version of Walters over the past few years, while Pat O'Brien of "Access Hollywood" has also done some celebrity-oriented interview for NBC.

No other film appears to have

# Regis, 'Millionaire' returning to ABC

By DAVID BAUDER  
AP TELEVISION WRITER

**NEW YORK (AP)**—Two years after the prime-time "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire" died from overuse, ABC will bring the game—and Regis Philbin—back next month in a sweeps-month stunt with a \$10 million payoff.

"Super Millionaire" will air five times in six days starting Feb. 22, the network said Monday.

The value of the show's easiest question will jump to \$1,000 and the 15th and final question will similarly be worth 10 times what it was in the show's initial incarnation, said Lloyd Braun, ABC entertainment chairman.

Three new lifelines will be added to help contestants, who have been able to ask the audience and phone a friend for help answering a question. The game will also take on a different "look" when big money is at stake, he said.

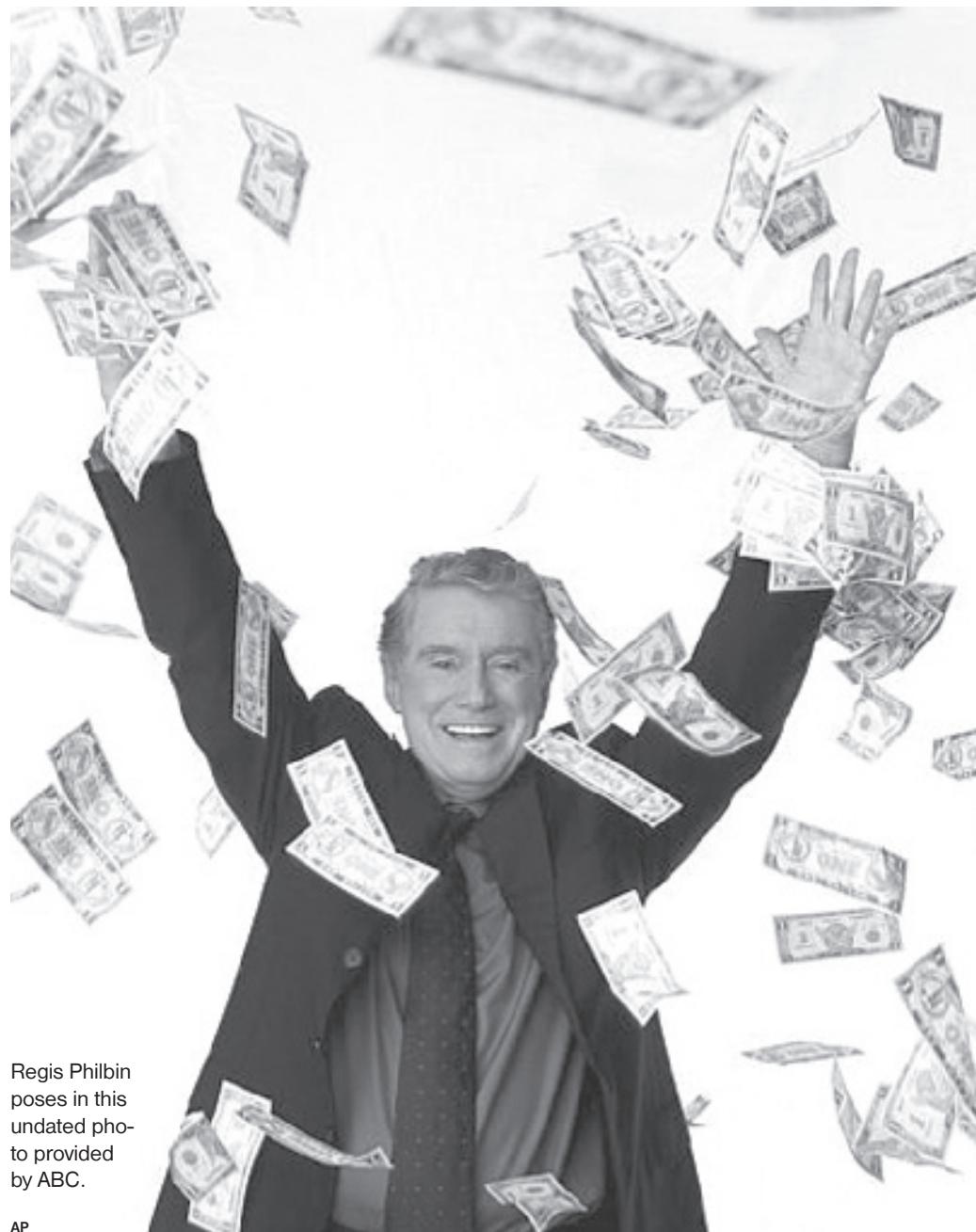
Although Meredith Vieira is host of the game's syndicated version, there was no question Philbin would return to prime time.

"He's part of the appeal of the show, and when you add these new things to amp up the format it will be a perfect combination of familiarity and something new and different at the same time," Braun said.

The time seemed right for the show's return, with the Vieiraled version of the game showing healthy ratings in its second year, said Michael Davies, "Super Millionaire" executive producer.

"Who Wants to Be a Millionaire" was both ABC's biggest success of the past decade and a huge downfall. An immediate sensation when introduced in the summer of 1999, ABC rode its success to a surprise season victory in the ratings.

The game was scheduled so often that audiences grew sick of it. When the ratings suddenly tumbled,



Regis Philbin poses in this undated photo provided by ABC.

AP

bled, ABC had little to replace it, leading to a collapse the network is still trying to recover from.

The last prime-time version of "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire" aired on June 27, 2002.

Davies has always believed the game worked best in prime time as a periodic special event, not as a regular series.

If it's a hit next month, Braun swears he'll resist the temptation to overuse it again.

"I've been very careful in my comments to make it clear that it will be resisted," Braun said. "This is one small piece in a much bigger puzzle, no matter how well it does. This is a sweeps month special and nothing more."

The game will air at 9 p.m. EST when it debuts on the fourth Sunday of February, then at 10 p.m. the following Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

The later start time may cost ABC a large family audience; one of the game's early appeals was as a show parents and children could watch together.

Braun said the strength of ABC's current schedule is its comedies, leaving much room for improvement at 10 p.m. He was also concerned about competing with Fox's "American Idol" and NBC's "The Apprentice" if it was on earlier.

## Jury selection begins in P. Diddy case

**NEW YORK (AP)**—Jury selection began Monday in a court case against Sean "P. Diddy" Combs, whose former chauffeur contends the rap mogul and a bodyguard forced him to speed away from the scene of a 1999 nightclub shooting.

State Supreme Court Justice Harold Beeler issued a gag order, telling the lawyers not to discuss the case with reporters.

Wardel Fenderson, 45, "was afraid that if he stopped (the car), he was going to be hurt by somebody in the car, and if he didn't, he was going to be hurt by the police," his attorney, Lawrence Bernstein, told the Daily News for Monday's editions.

Fenderson is suing for \$3 million; he's also filed claims against Combs' company, Bad Boy Entertainment, and Combs' bodyguard, Anthony Jones, who died in a November shooting in Atlanta.

Combs and former girlfriend Jennifer Lopez, who was present at the Dec. 27, 1999, shooting inside Club New York, have been subpoenaed to testify.

A spokeswoman for Combs said the lawsuit was an attempt to cash in on Combs' celebrity, the News reported.

Combs was acquitted in March 2001 of gun possession and bribery charges from the shooting, in which three people were injured. Rapper Jamaal "Shyne" Barrow was convicted of assault, reckless endangerment and weapons charges in the case.



Combs

## Rimes, Wynonna to sing at CMA festival

**NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP)**—LeAnn Rimes and Wynonna are among the stars expected to perform when the Country Music Association Music Festival, formerly known as Fan Fair, returns June 10-13 to downtown Nashville.

Also scheduled are Trace Adkins, Dierks Bentley, Clint Black, Brooks & Dunn, Glen Campbell, Terri Clark, Billy Ray Cyrus, Charlie Daniels, Diamond Rio, Vince Gill, Pat Green, Buddy Jewell, Lonestar, Jo Dee Messina, Montgomery Gentry, Keith Urban, Clay Walker and Darryl Worley.

More artists will be announced in the coming months.

"The CMA Music Festival has become a big party and a must for any country music enthusiast," CMA Executive Director Ed Benson said. "We've added new activities, expanded

the Fan Fair traditions that are the basis of our popularity and delivered a four-day event package that is economical for everyone."

Fan Fair has been in Nashville every year since 1972, most of those at the Tennessee State Fairgrounds. The CMA moved the festival downtown in 2001, providing more venues for performances and more entertainment options for festival-goers.

When Benson announced the name change last year, he said the purpose was to give the festival broader appeal.

But one hallmark of the long-running country music festival will remain the same—fan interaction with the stars. Fans will continue to be able to meet their favorite music and TV stars in autograph booths and in question-and-answer sessions.

## Husband becomes royal pain after medicating his bad back

By AVIGAIL VAN BUREN

**DEAR ABBY:** My husband hurt his back in 2000. Ever since, it has gotten worse. He takes enough pain pills and muscle relaxers to kill a horse.

Most of the time he is so out of it I can't talk to him. When I try, he gets mad and says I don't understand. I do understand, because I have been here since he got hurt.

I don't know what to do. I don't want to leave him because I love him, but I can no longer live like this. I also don't want my kids to see him like this anymore. Please help.

CONFUSED IN TEXAS

**DEAR CONFUSED:** Talk to the doctor who has been prescribing these medications about the debilitating effect they are having on your husband. There comes a time when most people have to wean themselves off habit-forming drugs—and it appears your husband is overdue. In fact, it may be time for the doctor to refer your husband to a pain specialist who can help him learn alternative methods for dealing with back pain. It's worth a try.

**DEAR ABBY:** This year my in-laws sent me a peek-a-boo nightie with thong panties for my birthday. I've met them only once.

I am shocked that they sent a gift like this to me. They have never sent me a birthday gift before (and I am not complaining). But I do not wear thong underwear.

Obviously, I will thank them for thinking of me. But how? And how can I tactfully suggest that they not send me something like this in the future?

SHOCKED IN NORTH CAROLINA

**DEAR SHOCKED:** Try this: "Dear Folks, thank you for remembering me on my birthday. I admit I didn't expect to be thought of in quite that way by my husband's parents! With love, your blushing daughter-in-law."

**DEAR ABBY:** My mom was running an errand at a local farmers' market and left my dad in the car. When she returned, four people were standing outside the car waiting for her. They had tried to tell my dad that the car had a flat tire. When he didn't respond, they waited for Mom, and then changed the tire for her.

What they didn't know was that my parents were on one of their first outings since Dad's colon cancer surgery a few weeks before. The prognosis wasn't good. My dad's Alzheimer's disease had also spiraled downward. Mom is now sole caregiver because most of their kids live far away.

That those strangers went out of their way to help her and perform an act of kindness meant more to her (and me) than they'll ever know.

I hope they read this and know how much their help meant. I also hope that others will see that a single act of kindness can be a precious gift that's never forgotten.

GRATEFUL DAUGHTER IN ILLINOIS

**DEAR GRATEFUL:** You've said it very well. A good deed is like a pebble thrown into a pool of water. The ripples spread far beyond the point of impact. Thank you for the timely reminder.

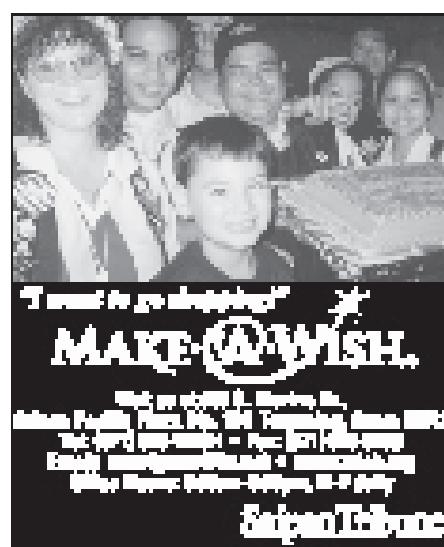
*Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.*

*For an excellent guide to becoming a better conversationalist and a more attractive person, order "How to Be Popular." Send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$5 (U.S. funds only) to: Dear Abby Popularity Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included.)*



*Dear Abby*

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